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Embassy
of the
Argentine Republic

PRESS COMMUNIQUE

The Malvinas Islands and its dependencies (South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands) are part of the territory of the Argentine Republic, which the United Kingdom illegally occupied by an act of force in 1833. That year, a British force attacked the Malvinas, imprisoned the Argentine Governor, expelled the Argentine population settled on the islands and dismantled the Argentine administration. This action was typical of the colonialistic policies implemented by the European powers in America, Asia and Africa during the XIX century. This British behavior was only an example in a pattern of naked agression as shown by the earlier British invasions and occupation of Buenos Aires in 1806 and 1807 and the naval blockades of Argentina in 1840 and 1848.

Thus, under the threat of its guns and without regard to the principle of self-determination, a British naval force evicted a peaceful population that was exercising the legitimate rights which Argentina, as heir to Spain since 1810, enjoyed on these territories located 300 miles off its coast.

Prior to 1833, England's silence confirmed her recognition of Argentina's sovereignty. In contrast, since 1833 Argentina has persistently and firmly protested British illegal occupation of the islands.

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Nearly 150 years of constant British rebuff and 16 years of sterile and frustrating bilateral negotiations held under U.N. auspices bear witness to Argentina's good will and readiness to solve the dispute through peaceful means. This positive attitude was recognized by the U.N.General Assembly in 1973 through Resolution 3160 (XXVIII) approved by 116 votes in favor and none against. That resolution, after stating that the General Assembly was "Gravely concerned at the fact that eight years have elapsed since the adoption of Resolution 2065 (XX) without any substantial progress having been made in the negotiations", expressed "its gratitude for the continuous efforts made by the Government fo Argentina, in accordance with the relevant decision of the General Assembly, to facilitate the process of decolonization and to promote the well-being of the population of the islands." The same recognition was repeated in 1976 in Resolution 31/49.

During the last round of bilateral negotiations, the Argentine Government put forward a series of written proposals to the British Government in order to find a peaceful solution to the sovereignty dispute. No answer whatsoever was received thus demonstrating that the long process of negotiations had not served for anything or taken us anywhere.

Recently Argentina was dismayed to see the pattern of British dilatory tactics and evasiveness turn again to outright intimidation attempts. Despite the fact that the Joint Declaration on Communications, signed in

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1971 by both countries, established a "temporary card" as the only document required for Argentine citizens to travel to the islands, the British Government not only denied its validity in the case of a group of Argentine workers who went to the South Georgia Islands to dismantle an old whaling station, but declared them illegal aliens and announced its decision to oust them from the island by force. This was coupled with the dispatch of warships and a nuclear submarine to the area, a move worthy of the best colonialist tradition.

This threat of imminent use of force constituted an act of aggression and conclusive proof of the United Kingdom's lack of good will to carry out serious and fruitful negotiations on sovereignty, the core of the dispute.

The need to counter this new threat, designed to perpetuate British hold on the islands, left Argentina with no choice but to protect its menaced workers and sovereign rights by regaining the lands that legitimately form part of its national territory.

Having purposely accomplished this without shedding a single drop of British blood, while several Argentine soldiers died as a result of this one-sided restraint, the Argentine Embassy feels compelled to acquaint American public opinion with the following:

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1) The recovery of the islands by Argentina entails no threat whatsoever to the present inhabitants of the islands, whose security, property and rights will be respected and guaranteed.

2) The British Ambassador to the U.S. has stated openly and repeatedly that the inhabitants of the Malvinas are "hostages". Such intemperate allegations on the part of a high-ranking diplomat who cannot fail to be aware of the deep emotional charge which the term holds for the American public, are appalling. It must be made quite clear, as stated by the Argentine Minister of Foreing Affairs that "the islanders are free to leave and any who do will be compensated for any damages."

3) In contrast with the empty declarations of the British Government's interest for the well-being of the islanders, Argentina can show concrete proof of the efforts it has made to improve their access to facilities and services, tied as they are inextricably to the mainland, by providing maritime transportation, regular flights, airport facilities, postal services, fellowships for students, medical care, supply of subsidized oil, etc.

4) The principle of self-determination of the islanders -which the United Kingdom so ardently defends now after

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having trampled it in 1833 -cannot possibly apply to the question of the Malvinas.

De facto and de jure, the islands belonged to Argentine Republic in 1833 and were governed by Argentine authorities and occupied by Argentine settlers. These authorities and these settlers were evicted by violence and not allowed to return to the territory. On the contrary, they were replaced, during those 149 years of usurpation, by a colonial administration and a population of British origin, now numbering some 1800 inhabitants. It is basically a temporary population that occupies the land and one that cannot be used by the colonial power in order to claim the right to apply the principle of self-determination.

Therefore, this principle would be ill-applied in cases like this, where part of the territory of an independent state has been wrested -against the will of its inhabitants- by an act of force, by a third State, without there being any subsequent international agreement to validate the de facto situation and where, on the contrary, the aggrieved state has constantly protested the situation.

5) The recovery of part of its national territory was an Argentine decision fully backed by the whole Nation.

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For 150 years it has been a matter beyond any partisan considerations, as shown by the widespread support received from all political parties, trade unions and every segment of Argentine society.

6) No State can possibly pretend to perpetuate today the statu quo of a colonial situation and at the same time feel affronted when the victim of this injustice reacts to redress it. No humiliation could be so profound as the one Argentina endured for 150 years during which part of its land was governed by a metropolis 8000 miles away, with complete disregard for its sovereign rights and with force as the only basis for the occupation.

7) The Argentine Republic is ready to explore all appropriate peaceful channels to solve its dispute with the United Kingdom.

Justice and reason are on Argentina's side. All aspects of the question -except sovereignty- are subject to discussion. But it stands just as ready to defend its rights and meet any aggression by every means at its disposal.

Washington,D.C., April 9, 1982